Dangerous Effects of Low level Nuclear Radiation

3569. SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that several countries are phasing out nuclear power stations after the Chernobyl and Three Mile incidents apart from scores of other lesser known incidents and health hazards caused to workers and nearby populations;

(b) whether Government are aware that several recent studies have established the highly dangerous effects of low level nuclear radiation; and

(c) if so, reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) Electricity generation by Nuclear Energy in the world increased by about 26% during the period 1990—99 as per information available. Although there has been slowing down in nuclear power capacity addition in U.S.A., Canada and Western Europe, this is to be looked at in the context of their self-sufficiency in meeting the electricity demand with a high level of per capita electricity consumption, stagnant population growth as well as easy access to other energy sources. It cannot be attributed to safety reasons. Safety in Nuclear Power Plants are getting continously upgraded world over to meet emerging concerns from time to time including lessons learnt from Chernobyl and Three Mile Island Accident. The nuclear capacity addition is now centered in Asia.

A study, based on International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) documents indicates that between the period 1990 to 1997 48 Nuclear Power Reactors were connected to the grid and as of the end of 1998, 36 Nuclear Power Reactors with a net capacity of 27536 MWe are reported to be under construction. About 16% of the world electricity needs are being met through nuclear power reactors.

(b) and (c) Studies on the biological effects of Nuclear Radiation have been in progress in several research institutions for many decades. These studies have been analysed and summarised by the United Nations Scientific Committee on the effects of Atomic Radiation. Based on these studies, the International Commission on Radiological Protection — a specialist organisation — makes periodic recommendations on the safe use of radiation. In line with these recommndations, the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board issues appropriate safety directives to regulate radiation exposure to radiation workers and members of the public in India.